

Middle School

October 6-7, 2012



Title: A Journey Home: Week 1 (The Promise of Home)

Series: A Journey Home

Series Description: Something incredible happens when we feel at home. We know we belong. We let our guard down and put up our feet. We know we're loved and we are brave—terrifically brave. But home doesn't come from a street address, kind group of friends or even a good family. The direct source of home is God—the perfect Dad who treasures his children. Because no matter our history or family of origin, we can all feel abandoned and alone. So we can either default to living as emotional and spiritual orphans or live in our true identity as sons and daughters.

Objectives:

Know: Ever since The Fall (a tragedy that happened in our family's history), we've acted like orphans who don't have a loving Dad who can be trusted. But God still wants us to be part of his family.

Do: Give examples of how our orphan hearts keep us from God and have kids identify one specific example in their own lives.

Where to find it: Genesis 3, Romans 3:10-12, John 1:12

Schedule for all Sites:

Hang time	(10 minutes before service begins)
Worship and Teaching	(at the start of the service hour, 25-30 minutes)
Small Groups	(last 35 minutes of the service)

Leader Notes: The next 6 weeks are really important in the lives of the students in your group. Encourage them to engage in the journey—and model what that looks like. Share personal insights you're getting and don't be afraid to be vulnerable with them. Share your story where and when it's appropriate.

Large Group Teaching Script

Room Set-up and Presenter Notes: In the middle of the teaching area will be a single tree. Make sure it's conspicuous/in the way—put it somewhere you'll have to walk around as you teach. It won't be written into the lesson, but stop from time to time and be visibly bothered by the tree being in your way—allow it to “break” your concentration at different intervals. The tree is in the middle of our lives everyday—we must deal with that tree in every decision we make. So use it to help you drive home this point in a subtle way.

Song: Home (by Phillip Phillips)

(We're opening with a song, either live or the video: [youtube.com/watch?v=HoRkntoHkIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoRkntoHkIE))

Welcome and Series Introduction (Presenter)

Welcome to Middle School. I'm _____ and I'm really glad you're here today. Today we're beginning a 6 week journey together. A Journey Home actually (**show series slide**). For the next 6 weeks, you and I are going to explore our family's history in search of our true home. What does it mean to have a home and a family? What does it mean to live as God's Treasured Child instead of living as an Abandoned Orphan? Who are we really meant to be? Why are we the way we are? Why is the world the way it is?

Question—Most at Home

How would you answer this question, "Where do you feel most at home?" It could be a specific place or it could be with a specific person or group of people. It might be when you're doing a certain activity. When do you feel like you can let your guard down and kick your feet up—and be you? Do you have your answer in mind?? If you're not sure, no worries. Even if you have a place in mind, there are probably many times when you don't feel "at home."

What if we could always feel like we were at home, no matter where we are or who is around? (pause a moment)

What if we lived all the time with a sense that God really loved us no matter what, even when we screw up? (pause for a moment)

Invitation to join regardless of where you are

For most of us though, that's not the way it works. Most of us, including me and the adults in this room (and your parents), don't live like we're at home. Most of us actually live like orphans, even though we have a father who created us and loves us more than we can possibly imagine. Most of us don't know how to really receive our place in God's family, actually living like one of God's treasured and dearly loved children, no matter where we are or what we're doing. For some of us, the idea that there's a God who exists that knows our names and cares about us just sounds too good to be true. For some of us, we can believe that God exists, but we just can't imagine ever measuring up enough to earn his approval. And some of us try so hard to earn God's love and we think we actually can if we just do all of the right things. If any of this sounds like you, you're in the right place. God really wants to take each of us to a new and different place and I hope you'll go with us on this journey.

Family Tree

Family stories are often told through a family tree (**show pic of family tree**). You might think that we don't share any family history. Maybe your ancestors came from Europe or Africa or maybe your ancestors were Native Americans. It doesn't really matter where your ancestors were from—or where mine came from. We actually share a history—a human history—and are part of the same family that God set out to create at the very beginning.

But something has happened to our family. Our family is jacked up! Something is not the way it's supposed to be. You and I—and the world we live in—are not the way God meant us to be. You may have had glimpses of this before—hints that things are not as they should be. But why?

Universe

(show picture of deep space) The Bible says that in the very beginning God created the universe. We don't know all of the specifics—they're really not that important. But what's important is that God intentionally created the world and it was exactly the way he wanted it to be—the perfect place for his kids to grow up. The perfect place to feel at home. A perfect family to be a part of. God created an amazing place for them to live—a garden paradise—and he placed two humans in the garden. Anybody know their names? (take responses). Yep—Adam and Eve. So all was good in paradise.

2 Trees

(show picture of tree) There are two trees mentioned in this story. One is called the Tree of Life—Adam and Eve could eat all of this fruit they wanted. God wanted them to have abundant life. The other tree is called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree was in the middle of the garden and God gave them specific instructions to not eat its fruit. God said, “If you eat it you will die.” Simple enough, right? Don't eat the fruit or you'll.....die. God job! Let's pick up our story in Genesis 3—in the Bible. We're actually going to read it together—I'll read out loud and stop to point a few things out along the way. You can follow along with your eyes on the screen if you want. **(Note—Presenter should pause during the reading and provide commentary where written in BOLD. This passage is quoted directly from the NLT.)**

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” **Hold up—is that what God said? No—just one tree; the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This snake is twisting God's words. “Did God really say?”—that question changed history.**

²“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. ³“It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

⁴“You won't die!” the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

Ok—here's the crucial point in this story. The only thing the woman knows at this point is that God said to not eat the fruit. She doesn't actually know what will happen if she eats the fruit—she may not even understand what death is. Maybe God was holding out on her or trying to trick her. She is faced with a decision—trust God or not? To be like God or not? Back to the story.

⁶The woman was convinced. **4 words...”the woman was convinced” This is one of the saddest moments in our family's history. She was convinced that God wasn't good and he couldn't be trusted. Rather than trust God even with the things she didn't know or understand, she decided to choose her own way.** She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. **So they ate the fruit. Would they now fall over and die?**

⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. **Shame. Fear. Isolation. We were never supposed to experience or feel these things. And we've been trying to cover up our shame and fear ever since with all different kinds of fig leaves.**

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. ⁹Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” **Our Father went looking for us. He knew what had happened and he went in search of his children.**

¹⁰He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

¹¹“Who told you that you were naked?” the Lord God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

¹²The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” **Here’s where the blame game starts and we begin to blame each other. This is where we begin to be isolated from each other and to do awful things to each other—all in our own self-interest.**

¹³Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?”

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.” **If you want to know why things are the way they are in the world, this is the root. This story explains why we don’t feel at home—why we don’t feel like God’s treasured children.**

Pictures tell the story

Pictures also tell a family’s story. Do these pics describe the family you know?

(Presenter—run through these and comment quickly on each one. Don’t feel the need to wrap them up with a nice bow—we’re just trying to give context for later activities.)

Isolation—do you ever feel alone? We were meant to never feel alone or be separated from each other. We were supposed to always feel secure—to know our father’s love and acceptance—to never doubt it. Even though we have 900 friends on Facebook, we still feel lonely.

Fear—do you ever feel afraid? Are things safe in your home? Do you ever *not* do something out of fear of what others will think? Imagine how it would be to live without any kind of fear!

War—humans were never meant to kill each other. Imagine a world without war and violence. No guns, bombs, bullets, lost limbs. No bullies or random shootings.

Beauty/Supermodels—do you feel like you’re supposed to measure up to these images? You were never meant to strive to measure up—you were meant to feel incredibly beautiful and valuable every minute of every day because of the way God your Father loves you. You were never supposed to get your worth from the way you look. Imagine feeling truly beautiful—the way God meant it.

Poverty/Excess—everyone was intended to have enough. We weren’t meant to hoard more than we need or to not have enough to survive. Poverty and Selfishness weren’t God’s plan. This wasn’t the way God wanted it. Imagine if everyone had enough and no one hoarded more than they needed.

Disease—sickness was never in the design. Imagine a world where no one ever got sick. No cancer, heart attacks, diabetes, flu, colds and allergies.

Shame—we were never meant to feel ashamed or to be afraid to talk with our father. Imagine never feeling ashamed! Seriously—no shame—how would that feel?

Report Card—what feelings does this pic bring up? You probably either feel like you don’t measure up—you’re not smart enough—or you might feel proud that you make the grades. We were never meant to get our approval from our intelligence—or to feel like crap because we didn’t make the grade.

Death—we were never supposed to attend funerals. We were designed to live forever—without death. No parents or grandparents or friends or siblings dying. Imagine never having to experience the pain of death.

We're Faced with the Tree Every Moment of Every Day

(Referencing the tree in your teaching area.) The tree in the garden plays an important part in our family's story. I've been walking around this one for the past few minutes and I can't get around it. It's in my way. I just can't get away from it. And honestly, we walk around it every minute of every day—we just don't often realize it. We're constantly living with the consequences that come from this tree. And every choice we make is connected to this tree. When we feel afraid or go to a funeral or don't have enough to eat or try to measure up to someone else's standard, the tree is there. It's a constant choice to trust God and believe that he is good or it's a choice to go our own way. Part of this journey we're going to take together is to recognize the role this tree plays in our lives—how this tree leads us to run and hide from the Father who loves us. We want to once again return home to our father. To know what it feels like to be a treasured child—the way it was before we ate the fruit. Let's talk to God for a moment and then we're going to sing a song together.

Prayer

Lead kids in a brief prayer, asking God to help us return home to him, our true and good father.

Worship (Band)

Songs: ***Home*** (Original song written for A Journey Home)

Dismiss to small groups.

Small Group:

Instructions:

Follow these activities in order. Unless the Holy Spirit seems to be doing something in the midst of the discussion questions, don't spend tons of time there. Try to leave time for kids to identify a label they're known by and to walk through the assessment tool. We want them walking away with a challenge to do this week.

Part 1: Discussion Questions—Large Group Recap

- What struck you about the story of the Fall?
- What saddens you most about all of the things that have changed since we decided not to trust God?
- What picture did you connect with the most? Why?
- What things keep people from really receiving their place in God's family?
- What's the difference between an orphan and a treasured child? Can you think of ways we might act like orphans instead of treasured children?

Part 2: What We're Known By

SAY: Everyone think of one description that you've been known by. For example, it could be a nickname, what your friends or family call you—something you love or hate. Here are some examples (Hyper Active, The Baby, The Middle Child, The Smart One, The Athletic One, Book Worm, Beautiful, The Quiet One, Trouble Maker, etc.). When you have it, write it down on a nametag.

Now I'd love everyone to answer 2 things:

1. Share one thing you've been known by
2. Say how it affects you

SAY: The things we've just talked about begin to reveal identities that we've picked up over the years. Even if they seem funny on the surface, it helps us to be aware of these identities because they can interfere with what God says about us.

Part 3: Assessment Tool and Pray together

SAY: Now, we're going to do a quick exercise to identify a behavior that might shape how we view God.

Pass out the assessment sheets and then say the following:

1. Quickly read through these descriptions and circle anything that describes you. Don't think too hard. Just go with your instinct.
2. Now choose one of the descriptions that you circled. How do you think this behavior could be affecting your view of God? Write down as many "Why" answers as you can.
3. Using the behavior you just circled, create a personal challenge that counteracts that behavior. This sheet has some examples—just match up the number from the behavior you circled to the number of the challenge (#23 to #23) e.g.).
4. Once you decide, write it down in the appropriate spot.
5. Now do it. Do your challenge this week and ask God to teach you something.

Prep Needs

Small Group

- Pens
- Assessment Tool (1 per kid) (Pages 18-22 in the Adult Guide PDF Version)
- Nametag (1-2 per kid) (can use old echeck labels)

Large Group

- Artificial Tree—should be large (at least 6'). Should be placed in a conspicuous place in the teaching area (in the way of the presenter). Could be a ficus like this:
<http://www.walmart.com/ip/16933967?adid=22222222227000889642&wmlspartner=wlp&wI0=&wI1=g&wI2=&wI3=13695857230&wI4=&wI5=pla&veh=sem>
- Bible

AV/Tech

1. Phillip Phillips' "Home" video (for sites without bands this weekend) (In KC Tech Multimedia Folder already) (for Partners, this is available on iTunes)
2. A Journey Home Series Slide
3. Picture: family tree: something like: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-q1Esbsa-sDA/TZJnNCI6W8I/AAAAAAAAABg/IlpKYV3HetI/s1600/Pat%2527s+family+tree.jpg>
4. Picture: deep space: something like
<http://www.xanaduobservatory.com/VeilFitsLibFirstTry.jpg>
5. Picture: Tree like this: <http://www.wdwlive.com/photos/animal-kingdom/discovery-island/tree-of-life/animal-kingdom-tree-of-life-sunset-6-9.jpg> OR
<http://www.avatar.matthewclose.co.uk/Media/Pandora8.jpg>
6. Verses: Genesis 3:1-13 (NLT) (see lesson)
7. Pictures—something like these:
 - Isolation: <http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-Mb-fjZCMRcg/Tsei2s8SXjl/AAAAAAAAAQs/2zrdZ79CrvG/s1600/lonely-man-looking-at-ocean+%25281%2529.jpg>
 - Fear: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-bGvel1bueFk/Te7YOB6yQ8I/AAAAAAAAAPg/VmnnK97FmxM/s1600/listening+scared.jpg>
 - War: <http://marksrichardson.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/nagasakibomb.jpg>
 - Super Models: http://images1.fanpop.com/images/image_uploads/Vanessa-in-Seventeen-seventeen-magazine-1162322_1132_1526.jpg
 - Poverty/Excess—All 3 pics on the same slide: <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-EE1N9xLKB1M/TnhVnxyds1I/AAAAAAAAADMU/1b0RK5pV6sQ/s1600/poverty-in-india-1.jpg> AND
http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_4ZkStP_uiLo/S7n7CK62gNI/AAAAAAAAAGqc/Wd2ZdAslZrY/s1600/hoarders.jpg AND <http://mssparky.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Piles-of-Money.jpg>
 - Disease: <http://us.123rf.com/400wm/400/400/moodboard/moodboard0811/moodboard081101729/3812853-man-with-flu-in-hospital-bed.jpg>
 - Shame: <http://www.enemyofdebt.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/shame.jpg>

- Report Card: <http://dealsinaz.com/deals/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/report-card.jpg>
- Death: <https://mysendoff.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Coffin-in-ground.jpg>